

REPORT/RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
OF SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
AND RECORD OF ACTION

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July 8, 2003

FROM: **BRIAN McCORMICK**
Public Administrator-Coroner

SUBJECT: **APPROVE CONTRACT WITH SOUTHWEST MORTUARY SERVICES, INC.
FOR CORONER'S BODY TRANSPORT SERVICES**

RECOMMENDATION: Approve a two-year contract with Southwest Mortuary Services, Inc. to provide body transportation services for the Central and Desert Division service areas of the County in the amount not to exceed \$266,715 from July 8, 2003 through June 30, 2004; and \$277,288 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: On May 23, 2000, the Board of Supervisors approved Contract No. 00-319 with All County Transport to provide decedent body transport services in the amount of \$172,800 annually with an expiration date of May 22, 2002. The contract was amended on June 19, 2001, for additional costs for FY 00/01 and extended the term through May 22, 2003. On February 25, 2003, the Board of Supervisors approved termination of Contract No. 00-319 with All County Transport and authorized the Coroner to give the Notice of Termination. The Coroner Department has been operating under a Purchase Order with Southwest Mortuary Services, Inc. for these services since then. On May 6, 2003 the Board of Supervisors approved an increase in the Purchase Order in the amount of \$50,000, to a total authority of \$75,000, and approved a Request for Proposal (RFP) for Coroner's Body Transportation Services. The RFP was posted on the Purchasing Department's website and we notified fourteen (14) firms of the posting. A total of three responses were received, with only one meeting the requirements as set forth in the RFP.

Government Code Section 27491 is the authority upon which the Coroner uses to remove decedents. The Coroner, on being informed of a death and finding it to fall into the classification of deaths requiring further inquiry, may immediately proceed to where the body lies, examine the body, make identification, make inquiry into the circumstances, manner and means of death, and, as circumstances warrant, order its removal for further investigation. It is always difficult to accurately forecast the annual cost for this service contract, as death location and the number of cases tend to vary from year to year.

Based on Board direction during the 2003-04 budget hearings and budget adoption on June 24, 2003, the Coroner has added a higher level of background investigation than that originally required in the RFP. As such, the cost for these additional items (fingerprinting, polygraph and psychological testing) will be borne by the County. The contractor has agreed to these terms and

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will make employees available for the additional testing. The Board also added a Staff Analyst position to the Coroner's budget to review all investigation results and to take other action to closely monitor the contractor's performance under this contract.

The contract period will be from July 8, 2003 to June 30, 2005, and the contract may be extended for one additional year at the discretion of the County, based upon the availability of funds and Contractor performance. However, the Coroner and the County Administrative Office will bring back to the Board a plan for the in-house provision of these services that could be implemented on July 1, 2005.

REVIEW BY OTHERS: This item has been reviewed by Purchasing (Terri Martinez, County Purchasing) on June 12, 2003, the Office of County Counsel (Charles Larkin, Deputy County Counsel) on June 18, 2003, and by the County Administrative Office (Marcia Faulkner, Administrative Analyst) on June 24, 2003.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Annual costs for these services are not to exceed \$266,715 for fiscal year 2003-04. Appropriations for the cost of this contract were increased by \$28,062 in the 2003-04 Final Budget adopted June 24, 2003. The 2004-05 contract costs will increase to \$277,288.

The 2003-04 Final Budget also includes \$8,000 for the higher level of background investigation costs and \$60,000 for the Staff Analyst position for the total program cost of \$334,715 for 2003-04. Additionally, a request for an increase to the body removal fee will be brought to the Board for adoption as soon as possible to help reduce county local cost.

COST REDUCTION REVIEW: The County Administrative Office has reviewed this agenda item and concurs with the department's proposal and recommends this action based on the mandate that the Coroner provide for decedent body transportation and that this action would assist the department in obtaining the lowest cost for these services.

SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT(S): ALL

PRESENTER: Edward E. Harter, Jr., Assistant Coroner (909) 387-2975